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804
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3011

September 28, 2016

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Received & Inspected

OCT 03 2016

FCC Mail Room

Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554-0004

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

It has come to my attention that the emergency communication system operated by Morris County Department of Law and Public Safety, in my Congressional District, has been compromised on numerous occasions due to interference, which occurs during certain atmospheric conditions, from a TV station in Arlington, Virginia. The interference of this system has resulted in the periodic loss of police, fire and emergency medical communications!

It is my understanding the FCC has previously been in contact with Morris County government and has identified that Virginia TV station as the cause of the problem.

We have been fortunate that no loss of life has occurred during any of these outages to date. However, I was informed of a recent incident where police were unable to communicate while pursuing a suspected car thief. Clearly, it is imperative that a remedy be found to permanently prevent these recurring failures before the next emergency occurs.

To that end, I request your review of this situation on an expedited basis.

Sincerely,

Thank you!



Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Member of Congress

RPF:ab



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

November 22, 2016

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
U.S. House of Representatives
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Frelinghuysen:

Thank you for your letter regarding the interference affecting the Morris County, New Jersey Emergency Communications System.

As you note in your letter, the Commission is aware of this issue, and has determined that this interference is caused by an unpredictable atmospheric phenomenon known as "ducting." Ducting interference occurs when television signals, which are normally confined to a station's service area, instead travel hundreds of miles. These signals can interfere with distant public safety communications systems operating on the same frequency.

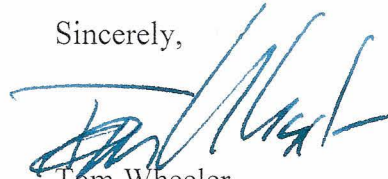
Ducting interference can occur even when both the communications system and the television station are operating in full compliance with the Commission's technical rules. To rule out the possibility that the recent ducting interference that Morris County's communications system experienced was due to the station not complying with the Commission's rules, engineers from the Commission's Enforcement Bureau performed an on-site inspection of the station's transmission facilities on October 17, 2016. Although the Enforcement Bureau's analysis of the results is not yet complete, preliminary data indicate that the station is operating in full compliance with the Commission's technical rules.

In previous correspondence, the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau (PSHSB) noted that Morris County could mitigate the interference by operating on another frequency or channel. The Commission has granted waivers allowing other New Jersey public safety communications systems experiencing ducting interference to change their operating frequencies. PSHSB staff are available to help Morris County determine whether a change of frequencies is an option in this case.

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I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Tom Wheeler